

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 093293

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM WILSON, D/HA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF

SUBJ: INDOCHINESE REFUGEES PROGRAM-RELATIONS WITH
THE VOLAGS.

1. THE RECENT FLURRY OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE EMBASSY
AND D/HA STEMMING FROM OUR CONCERN ABOUT WHAT APPEARED TO BE
AN INORDINATELY SLOW RATE OF MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES IN THE
REGULAR LAO PROGRAM HAS UNCOVERED WHAT I FEAR WILL PROVE TO
BE A MUCH MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM. IN REFTEL, THE EMBASSY HAS
PROVIDED A STATUS REPORT ON 710 LAO REFUGEES WITH VERIFIED
SPONSORS. THIS INDICATES THAT A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF
THESE REFUGEES EITHER WILL NOT BE COMING TO THE U.S. AT ALL
OR PROBABLY CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO COME IN THE NEAR FUTURE.
ADDITIONALLY, OF THOSE NOW MANIFESTED TO TRAVEL, MANY ARE
CASES GOING BACK TO FEBRUARY OR EARLIER.

2. PART OF THE PROBLEM WHICH WE FACE, OF COURSE, IS THE
NEED TO MOVE THESE REFUGEES AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE
IN ORDER TO MOVE THE PROGRAM FORWARD AS FAR AS POSSIBLE BE-
FORE THE EXPIRATION OF FY 1976. A FAR MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM
HOWEVER, IS THE DAMAGE THAT IS BEING DONE TO OUR RELATIONS
WITH THE VOLAGS BECAUSE OF THESE CONTINUING DELAYS. THE
VOLAGS POINT OUT THAT WOULD BE SPONSORS ARE BECOMING
ALIENATED TO DANGEROUS DEGREES BY THE FAILURE OF SPONSORED

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REFUGEES TO ARRIVE AFTER EXTENSIVE AND IN MANY CASES

EXPENSIVE PREPARATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE. AS I KNOW YOU ARE FULLY AWARE, WE ARE VERY MUCH DEPENDENT UPON THE COOPERATION OF THE VOLAGS TO COMPLETE THIS PROGRAM WITHIN THE TIME FRAME WHICH WE CONTEMPLATE. WE CANNOT AFFORD, THEREFORE, TO LET THE FRUSTRATION AND DISGRUNTLEMENT WHICH IS BEING ENGENDERED BY SUCH DELAYS TO CONTINUE WITH THEIR POTENTIAL DANGER TO THE PROGRAM AS A WHOLE.

3. WE ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE EXTREME PRESSURES AND DIFFICULTIES UNDER WHICH YOUR PEOPLE ARE LABORING AND SYMPATHIZE WITH THEM. I HOPE YOU WILL, THEREFORE, NOT REGARD THIS MESSAGE AS A CRITICAL ONE BUT AS AN EFFORT TO LAY OUT AND SEEK A SOLUTION TO THIS VERY TROUBLING PROBLEM. IT MAY WELL BE THAT UNDER THE CURRENT CONDITIONS IN THAILAND THAT, EVEN IF THE FLOW OF REFUGEES CAN BE SUBSTANTIALLY SPEEDED UP, YOU WILL STILL HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUAL CASES WHICH DO NOT MOVE WITHIN THE TIME FRAME ANTICIPATED BY THE SPONSORING AGENCY. IT IS TO THIS PROBLEM, I BELIEVE, WE MUST ADDRESS OURSELVES.

4. ONE OBVIOUS STEP WHICH MUST BE TAKEN IS FOR US TO BE CERTAIN IN THE FUTURE THAT REFUGEES ARE ONLY ASSIGNED TO THE VOLAGS IF WE CONSIDER THEM MOVEMENT READY. THUS, WE WOULD NOT ASSIGN ANY FURTHER EMPLOYEES OF THE EMBASSY, OFFICE OF REFUGEE AFFAIRS, UNTIL SHORTLY BEFORE THEY WERE PREPARED TO LEAVE FOR THE U.S. CONCURRENTLY, IT CERTAINLY MUST BE SOP FOR THE EMBASSY TO IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY D/HA AT ANY TIME THAT A SPONSORSHIP VERIFICATION CABLE IS RECEIVED IN BANGKOK IF THE EMBASSY IS AWARE THAT THE REFUGEE IS CURRENTLY UNABLE TO MOVE AT THAT TIME. WE HAD PREVIOUSLY, FOR INSTANCE, RECEIVED NO NOTIFICATION ON ANY OF THE REFUGEES FOR WHOM WE HAVE VERIFIED SPONSORS BUT WHO ARE SHOWN BY REFTEL TO BE EITHER NOT COMING OR NOT COMING FOR SOME MONTHS. IF SOMEONE IS DROPPED OR DEFERRED WHO HAS A VERIFIED SPONSOR AN IMMEDIATE EFFORT MUST BE MADE TO PROVIDE A SUBSTITUTE. OTHERWISE WE WILL LOSE A LARGE PART OF THE GOODWILL EVERYONE HAS WORKED SO HARD TO BUILD UP WITH THE VOLAGS AND SPONSORS.

5. THIS LEAVE US, HOWEVER, WITH A LARGER UNSOLVED PROBLEM BEST ILLUSTRATED BY THE 168 REFUGEES LISTED IN REFTEL WHO HAVE "PROBLEMS" AND THE SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF CONFIDENTIAL

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OLD CASES AMONG THOSE NOW MANIFESTED FOR MOVEMENT. I RECOGNIZE THAT THE HEAVY DEMANDS LAID ON YOUR PEOPLE BY THE DEPT MAKES IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO PROVIDE US WITH A RUNNING STATUS REPORT ON REFUGEES ENCOUNTERING SUCH PROBLEMS PRIOR TO DEPARTURE FROM BANGKOK. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SYSTEM AS IT IS WORKING IS CAUSING US INCREASING DIFFICULTIES HERE.

6. TWO POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS, NEITHER PERFECT, OCCUR TO US

HERE. THE FIRST WOULD BE TO INSTRUCT THE VOLAGS NOT TO EXPECT THE ARRIVAL OF THE REFUGEE UNTIL NOTIFIED BY ICEM AND TO MAKE NO BINDING PREPARATIONS PRIOR TO THAT TIME. WE DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LEAD TIME ICEM COULD GIVE THE AGENCIES WITHOUT ALTERING ICEM'S OWN OPERATING PROCEDURES BUT SUPPOSE THIS MIGHT BE ABOUT TWO WEEKS. THIS, OF COURSE, DOES NOT ALLOW THE SPONSOR MUCH TIME TO PREPARE FOR THE REFUGEE'S ARRIVAL. AN ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION WOULD BE TO INVITE THE VOLAGS TO SEND A REPRESENTATIVE TO BANGKOK TO ASSIST IN THE PROCESSING OF THE CASES ASSIGNED TO THEIR AGENCY. AS WE VISUALIZE IT, THE AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE WOULD NOT BE INVOLVED WITH EMBASSY SCREENING AND INTERVIEWING OPERATIONS BUT WOULD WORK PRIMARILY WITH ICEM AFTER THE REFUGEE HAD BEEN CLEARED BY INS.

7. WE WILL BE MEETING WITH THE AGENCIES ON APRIL 20 ON A NUMBER OF MATTERS AND HOPE TO DISCUSS THIS PROBLEM WITH THEM AT THAT POINT. THUS, I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR THOUGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. ROBINSON

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